

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Remarks at a Campaign Reception in Tempe, Arizona
September 28, 2023

The President. I want to take your mayor home with me. *[Laughter]* Please have a seat if you have one.

And I'll be—I'll be necessarily brief. *[Laughter]* I'm taking off my coat not to speak longer, just to let you know I understand—hey, I understand that this is a cool day for you all. *[Laughter]* Oh, thanks, man.

Look, Mayor, you've done a hell of a job. And—no, I really mean it. And you have a way about you that people look at you and listen to you and know you mean we just say.

When I was a young Senator, they used to say Biden—tell you he always means what he says; the problem is, he sometimes says all that he means. *[Laughter]*

And Greg is in Washington. We're trying to avoid what is totally avoidable. You know what was going on out—look, you know, what happened was I actually negotiated with the Speaker of the House, the—for preventing us from reneging on a national debt that's over 200 years old because they wanted some ridiculous request. And we got it done, and we shook hands, and we said that's the deal. And it still cut the deficit by a trillion dollars, and we maintained all the major programs.

And that was—we made a deal. Where I come from, you shake hands, you make a deal—it's a deal. And immediately upon taking office, they tried to change it already. Everything we're—everything we've been talking about, they wanted to change. I won't go into detail, in the interest of time and the heat. But you know—you know, I think what they need is, they need a little bit of a Brittney Griner going to—*[inaudible]*. Slam dunking those suckers, Brittney. I tell you what.

And what I need is—I tell you what, your wife Cherelle, I'd like to keep her in the Oval Office. She is relentless. She is relentless.

Look, you know, I'd talk about what Kamala and I have accomplished, but I don't want to take all that time right now. The bottom line is that the times that I've been in public life—and it's only been a couple of years. *[Laughter]* You know, I know I'm not old. You know, I mean, I can't even pronounce the number of—the number of years I've occupied so far.

But all kidding aside, one of the things we've—I've always argued was—and I come from the corporate State of the world, in Delaware. So I'm not antibusiness. I'm not anticorporation. But I think it's about time we changed the dynamic about how to grow this country.

For the longest time, in the last, really, actually, almost 30 years, we've not invested in America—invested in America. We have not invested in the American people, and we've had a— a notion of economic growth that was trickle-down economics. What was good at the top would trickle down and help everybody.

Not a whole lot of that trickled down to my dad's kitchen table, growing up. And so I've always been of the view in the Democratic Party and in the Congress and as Vice President and now—the notion that the best way to build a country is from the middle out and the bottom up. That way, the wealthy do very well—no problems—and—as long as they pay their taxes, and I'm not being facetious when I say that—and we grow. We grow.

Well, that's what we've done. And in the first—not even—you know, just a couple of years, we have—we have made sure that we've hired more new people in America—13 million 500—

400 thousand—than any President has in a 4-year period—any President has in a 4-year period. We moved in a direction where we have—where middle class people are really having a shot. They're having a shot and they're doing well. And they're beginning to—but there's a lot else going on around them that—a little bit I want to talk about.

But you know, I wasn't going to run again in nine—in 2020. I had just lost my son in Iraq. And he was the attorney general of the State of Delaware, but he was also a decorated war veteran, a major with a Conspicuous Service medal and a Bronze Star, et cetera.

And I decided I was out. And what I did was, I spent my time setting up a foreign policy institute at the University of Pennsylvania, where I was a professor. And they gave me a stipend to hire—\$2 million to hire people. And so I had people teaching with me up there—guys who didn't know—don't know much about foreign policy, like the Secretary of State and others—[laughter]—who came along.

And so but there was a lot of—it was kind of a drumbeat among my friends that I should run. And I said I wasn't going to do it—until something happened.

What happened was—you may remember that in—sometime in August, there was a group of people down in Charlottesville, Virginia, who came marching out of fields—literally marching on the fields at night with lighted torches, carrying swastikas, accompanied by the Ku Klux Klan, and reciting the same anti-Semitic bile that was sung in—throughout Germany in the early thirties.

And that's when I decided I just couldn't keep silent anymore. And when that young woman was killed, I spoke to her mom.

And the President was asked what he thought. And his comment was—he said there were "very good people on both sides." "Very good people on both sides."

Well, silence is complicity in my family—and a lot of yours as well. And so we got engaged. We got engaged and decided to run.

And you know, one of the things that we did was to focus on trying to just get the—stabilize the economy, get things moving a little bit so ordinary people have a shot. And in addition to that, you know, we've created more manufacturing jobs in America than anybody ever has: 800,000—800,000 manufacturing jobs.

I went around the world—because I believe there's nothing the American people aren't—can't do or aren't willing to do if they get a fair shot—if they get a fair shot. And so what happened was, I spent a lot of time traveling the world and was able to get over \$500 billion in private investment in government programs. We brought along the CHIPS Act, a whole range of things I'm not going to bore you with.

But the end result is, it meant jobs. For example, these, quote, "fabs" that are being built—we invented that little computer chip. We invented it when we went to the Moon. We refined it.

We used to have 40 percent of all of it was produced in America. And then along came—along came the—the serious loss of a million people in the Nation because of a virus. And the chain of control for access to these materials started to dry up.

So I went around the world. For example, I went to the South Korean—to SK, one of the major chip manufacturers, and I asked them whether they'd be engaged in providing for investing in America because we didn't have those chips. Remember, automobile prices skyrocketed?

Everything—everything from your cell phone to an automobile, they all need these little chips smaller than the end of your finger. And so I went to them, and I said, "I want you to invest in America."

He said, "I want to invest in America," so he invested a total of \$100 billion in America. And the first major investment is going to be in—they're doing it now—outside of Columbus, Ohio. There's a thousand acres there. And I dubbed it the "Field of Dreams," because what's going to happen is when they build their "fabs," as they call them—they're about the size of football fields, building these computer chips.

The average salary is between \$121- and \$136,000 in the "fab." Well, guess what? You don't need a college degree. And all of a sudden, an awful lot of people are given the chance to make a living—a decent living for their families in a way—and everything is building around them as they build this facilities—and these facilities.

They're building everything from supermarkets to drugstores to beauty shops. Everything is changing. And it's happening all across America.

And so the end result of all this was, we're really beginning to move. But in the meantime, there's a lot of other things. I'm very proud of what we've done.

But in the meantime, I thought—when I ran in 2020, I really did think democracy was at stake. And I wasn't—that's not hyperbole. I really thought it was. And when that—you know, the idea that today—that doubts democracy was at stake in 2020, there are not many people.

And I might add we won convincingly and clearly, you know, without question. We won by 7 million votes nationwide. But we also had—there were a total of 60 legal challenges in courts. Every single one we won, and the other team lost—every single one, including the Supreme Court.

And then you had the insurrection on—on the 6th of January. It's off of my office, a little dining room just off the Oval Office. He sat there and watched what was happening, watched what was going on.

And so here we are. We're running again because I still think that if we were to give up this seat, we're going to—if the Democrats don't own the Presidency, we're going to find ourselves in the position where democracy is literally—literally—at stake.

And you know, something else I know, and that is that, you know, notwithstanding the fact that I'm the old guy here, you know, there comes—there, hopefully, comes a little bit of wisdom with age.

And you know, Kamala and I came to office with the notion that we're flat on our back, and what happened was we—we put together programs that generated some real growth. I know what to do to bring NATO together again. I know what to do to unite Europe against the Russians in Ukraine. It's what I've done my whole life. I know what to do when we're dealt with a whole range of these issues.

But here's the point—and I'm skipping around, but I want to get to the—so you don't have to sit there that long. *[Laughter]*

What—you know, I thought—I thought when I was—when I left the United States Senate, I was able to convince Strom Thurmond—remember who he was? Old segregationist? Strom Thurmond voted for the extension of the Voting Rights Act—Strom Thurmond. And I thought you could defeat hate—you could defeat it.

All you can do—all you can do—is bury it, hide under a—hide it under a rock. But it doesn't die. It's there. If someone comes along and breathes oxygen into it, it rises up again.

Think of all the hate rhetoric that is going on today in American politics. Think of what's happening. It was a real lesson for me. I thought we could actually defeat it. But you just have to stay at it.

So we're running because, you know, we want to send the strongest, clearest, most powerful message that we're never, never, never, never going to accept the MAGA Republican philosophy about how we run this country.

And, folks, you know, one of the things that is—just a few months ago, after a long negotiation with me and the Speaker, these guys came along and they decided to change everything to try to shut down the Government, in large part because they want to fundamentally change the agreement they made.

These guys think that, for example, cutting a hundred thousand teachers is a good idea—funding teachers. They think that we should be moving in a direction where we fundamentally change our contributions to—they want to do away with what I did with the drug companies.

I've been trying to—I've been arguing with the drug companies my whole career because we should be able to bargain with the drug companies. We pay them billions of dollars in Social Security—I mean, excuse me, Medicare payments. Well, guess what? We're not allowed to negotiate. Well, we are now.

And guess what? Instead of paying 400 bucks a month for insulin, you're going to pay 35 bucks a month.

No senior in America—no senior in America—no senior in America is going to be in a position in the next 2 years where they have to—no matter how expensive all of their—all their drug bills are, all their prescriptions—including prescriptions that cost \$13- to \$15,000 a year for cancer—they will never have to pay more than \$2,000 a month, period, for that.

And guess what? It's not only is it the right thing to do, it saves the Federal Government billions of dollars—billions of dollars—billions of dollars not having to be paid out of your taxes to pay for these exorbitant—do you know how much it costs to make that insulin, by the way? Ten dollars. To package it is another \$2.40. They're still making 35 bucks a shot. That's, you know, triple.

My point is that there's this small group of Republicans who are controlling the Republican Party right now and particularly in the House. And you know—and they believe if you—some of the things they say, for example—you know, we don't think, Kamala and I, that this is a dark, negative nation, that we're a mean-spirited people, that we don't care. We don't believe that.

You know, Trump does though. Here's the things he says. He says to his supporters, "I am your retribution." Isn't that a great way to run for President? "I am your retribution." "We're a failing nation." "Either we"—these are quotes. "Either we win—either they or we win; if they, then we no longer have a democracy—we no longer have a country." And it goes on.

Did you see recently where he called for the assassination—or the death penalty for General Milley, one of the leading military minds we have had in the last 20 years in America, because he disagreed with—Trump disagreed when he gave him an honest answer. Think about that. Think about that.

And so the point is simple, that we're in a situation where unless we are able to fundamentally nail down who we are as a country and what kind of democracy we are, we're in trouble.

I'm going walk up here and speak louder. [*Inaudible*] [*Laughter*] You're a great American. All right. That's true.

But look, we wonder—the rest of the world is really looking to us. Madeleine Albright was right; we are the "essential nation." They're looking to us. Are we going to continue to lead the world? Who leads the world if we step back? Who holds NATO together? Who deals with what's

going on in the Middle East? Who puts India—who puts Japan and North and South Korea together? Who deals with what we're doing down in the Indian Ocean?

Who deals with this major, major, major challenge coming from China? Which, by the way, as we say in the sports I used to play, "They're not a patch on our jeans, man," right now. [Laughter] No, I'm serious. Think—think.

I asked every world leader—and I'm not joking. I say, "Would you trade places with Xi Jinping?" I haven't found one leader in the world who would trade places with his problems. And we walk around like, "Whoa, whoa."

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm not looking to have a fight with China. But I'm making clear to China we're not going to be bent to what they're doing, what they're trying to do.

And so there's a lot going on that, if we step out of the picture—and by the way, you talk to Trump—what's he say about—he says, "You know what"—I'm paraphrasing—"Putin I can deal with; he's a decent guy." [Laughter] As we say in my religion, "Bless me, Father, for he has sinned." [Laughter]

I've spent more time with Putin about [than; White House correction] any world leader has over the last 23 years. Putin does not have a democratic bone in his body. When he invaded Ukraine, he—no one listened to what I was urging them to say—to listen to. He made his speech right after the invasion, which I predicted they were invading, and then went in with the 158,000 people.

And guess what? The speech he made was very straightforward. "Kyiv is the motherland of Russia—Mother Russia. It's our—they're a bunch of Nazis trying to take away—they're going to invade Russia. They're going"—I mean, all this stuff. And look what's happened.

And now we're talking about stepping back and not supporting Ukraine? Look, Ukraine is not perfect. I spent 2 years before this war began in Ukraine trying to deal with the oligarchs and the corruption listed there. We made real progress. There's more to do. But these folks are incredible.

Did you ever think you'd see a group of people—men, women, and children—fighting so bravely for their lives and their land?

So, look, there's a lot we can—we're on the cusp of doing an awful lot of things that can literally change the trajectory of the world if we, in fact, stick to who we are. And I'm not just talking about Ukraine. I'm talking about everything we do in terms of where we invest, how we invest, what we do, and how we give people a chance.

And so—I know it's hot. [Laughter]

But look, let me end this way. If we are able to continue to be straightforward with the American people, tell them what we want to do, how we want to do it, and why it's so important, and talk about the alternative—talk about the alternative as well so they understand what the choice is—this is a serious, serious choice the country is about to make. And we're either on a trajectory to fundamentally improve our relations around the world and our economy at home, or we're going to risk fighting like hell just to maintain our democracy—just to maintain it.

When I say maintain our democracy—and what I'll do—if any of you want it, I just made a major speech down at the university—is I'm talking about the constitutional guardrails that protect democracy. We the—when you talk about everything from how we deal with the Declaration of Independence, "We the People," it's about who we are. The Constitution, the separation of powers.

When you have a President who says he wants to set up a new civil service called the—*[inaudible]*—service, which is answerable not to the American people, but directly to the President. Not loyalty to the country; to him. First thing I did, I got rid of it when I got in office.

But he's coming back talking about having to hire a hundred thousand people that will displace the civil service. Since when? Since when are we in the United States have the secret—what was the civil service, the new one they're talking about, answerable to the President—answerable to the President and not the people and not to the laws?

So there's a lot going on—a lot going on. But the fundamental reason why I'm so optimistic is because of the young people in this country. I mean it. No, no, no, I'm not being solicitous.

They are the best educated, the most engaged, the least prejudiced, and the most competent generation in American history. And they get it, but what we have to do is make it clear to them we understand what's at stake too.

And by the way, you know, this guy, the argument he's making now about auto workers is "Biden's your problem because Biden wants to have electric vehicles." *[Laughter]*

I'm serious. That's what he's saying. That's the argument. And the idea he goes to a union hall—it's not a union hall—management, and he pays them to hold up signs saying they're union members? Come on.

The rest of the world is looking. And I'm going to try like hell not to let you down. Because, I tell you what, we've got to get by this election. We've got to reestablish, with firmness, American democracy so there's no questions anymore. And we still have a lot to do.

So thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:48 p.m. at the residence of Roberta and Jim Pederson. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Corey D. Woods of Tempe, AZ; Rep. Gregory J. Stanton; Speaker of the House of Representatives Kevin O. McCarthy; Brittney Y. Griner, center, WNBA's Phoenix Mercury, and her wife Cherelle; Vice President Kamala D. Harris; Susan Bro, mother of Heather D. Heyer, who was killed during the vehicular attack in Charlottesville, VA, on August 12, 2017; former President Donald J. Trump; Tae-won "Anthony" Chey, chairman, SK Group; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley, USA; President Xi Jinping of China; and President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 29. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

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